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Another World or the World of an Other? The Space of Romance in Recent Versions of “Beauty and the Beast”

by Cynthia Erb

In Henry Jenkins's recent audience study of the television series “Beauty and the Beast” (1987–1990), a fan's comment stands out: “No matter how grim it got, there was always a warm balcony scene at the end of each episode.”¹ The fan describes her pleasure in the show by referring to the balcony scenes, in which heroine Catherine Chandler and her beast-love, Vincent, meet by moonlight for intimate tête-à-têtes, their bodies silhouetted against the visual splendor of the Manhattan skyline at night.² These scenes manifest the show's overall investment in lavish displays of space—images of the Tunnel World furnishing other striking examples. In a sense, the fan's isolation of the balcony scenes in fond memory stands as a kind of fetishization of spatial spectacle, offering an expression of viewer pleasure supported not only by the text itself but also by the advertisements, stills, and other promotional texts that similarly condense and represent “B and B”/TV's “attractions” by replaying moments of spatial spectacle.

The Disney corporation has become especially practiced in this strategy of fetishizing film space for commercial purposes. In the case of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), the song “Be Our Guest,” which underlays images that recall the spatial experiments of Busby Berkeley musicals and Disney's own *Fantasia* (1940), was extrapolated with some ease from the textual fabric of the film, only to be cut up and replayed as an advertising jingle designed to beckon tourists toward the rather different spatial spectacle of Disney World–Florida. This sort of textual and promotional investment in spatial spectacle is not exceptional: Barbara Klinger has shown that commodification of spectacular film space is a routine practice of the entertainment industry.³ Still, the insistent connections made between spatial spectacle and fantasy in recent versions of “Beauty and the Beast” furnish an occasion not only to investigate changing functions of spatial articulation in a form that might be designated postmodernist romance but also to consider how such changes affect constructions of gender in this form. The label “postmodernist” seems apt, since both versions of “B and B” exhibit the features of generic hybridity, stylistic mixing, and heavy use of parody and citation deemed conventional in postmodernist genre films. In ad-

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dition, both texts effect an overall destabilization of traditional gender roles that has become a defining feature of postmodernist cinema, evident in such films as *Videodrome* (1982) and *Blue Velvet* (1986). “B and B”/TV and *B and B*/Disney both offer unusually willful, intelligent, “spunky” heroines, and both are even better known for envisioning the Beast in the form of the Robert Bly-style New Man (or New “Beast Man”).

Space and spatial spectacle have of course been prominently featured not only in postmodernist cinema (e.g., the oft-cited *Blade Runner* [1982], or the films of Tim Burton) but also in postmodernist theory and criticism. Fredric Jameson’s well-known writings on postmodernism establish a contrast between the experience of temporality associated with modernist art and the often disorienting spatialization of postmodernist culture.⁴ Jameson often draws his illustrations from contemporary architecture (e.g., his extended discussion of the spatial design of Los Angeles’s Bonaventure Hotel) to demonstrate that changes characteristic of the postmodernist moment become most apparent in “the lived experience of built space itself.”⁵

Despite the impact of postmodernist theory on film studies, feminist film scholarship has not fully addressed how postmodernism’s distinct mappings of film space define and delimit gender positions available within the contemporary film romance. Often interested primarily in questions of female identity and desire, feminist scholars of romance have tended to adopt character-centered methods suited to analysis of changing constructions of femininity and women’s relationship to heterosexual romance and marriage. In a lucid discussion of 1980s film romances, for example, Mimi White shows that films such as *Romancing the Stone* (1984) and *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985) subscribe to a kind of “both/and” logic: on the one hand, the films seek to address an audience increasingly defined by feminist consciousness by offering female protagonists who are active, free-thinking agents of a fantasy/adventure narrative; on the other, the films’ narrative development and resolution still hinge upon the eventual formation of the heterosexual couple.⁶ White’s ideological analysis requires a certain focus upon female characters as narrative agents, and yet her neglect of issues of space is noteworthy, since all of the films she analyzes deploy spatial spectacle as backdrop for romance and flights of female fantasy. Indeed, the use of spatial displacement as a means of representing changes in female identity is such a prominent feature of romances as various as *Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore* (1975), *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Desert Hearts* (1986), and *Thelma and Louise* (1991) that it arguably constitutes one of the principal conventions of contemporary women’s romance.

In a model analysis of the postmodernist mapping of space and gender in *To Live and Die in LA* (1985), Sharon Willis demonstrates that analyzing the social implications of film space enables the feminist critic to treat cinematic constructions of sexual difference as inextricably tied to other differential strata of class, sexuality, and race.⁷ In a sense, the critic who takes the space of romance into account is often in a better position to consider questions of social

difference that exceed such matters as female identity and marriage as destiny. Consider the oft-cited case of *Desperately Seeking Susan*: rather than focusing exclusively upon the developing relationship between Roberta (Rosanna Arquette) and Susan (Madonna) and how this relationship provokes change and recognition in Roberta, the critic interested in articulations of space and location might examine the extent to which Susan's "attractiveness," so crucial to the narrative development and viewer pleasure, is a product of her status as seductive "carrier" of semes of racial, sexual, and class differences developed through her association with carefully managed representations of Greenwich Village and other spaces in New York City. Susan is insistently associated with African-American music in a film in which few black characters are featured; she is linked to New York districts that have a significant gay population, but no major gay characters are present; she experiences the "adventure" of living out of the Port Authority Bus Terminal—hardly an adventure for the real homeless people who take shelter there. By taking into account the film's stylized management of actual New York locations, one can assess the extent to which its particular unfolding of the space of romance effectively mutes "real" conditions prevailing in these urban locations. My intention is not to refute the importance of White's analysis, which has influenced my own in its provocative assessment of the "have it all" format favored by many postmodernist romances. I hope to suggest instead that factoring in questions of space potentially "opens up" feminist analysis of contemporary romance, extending the scope of analysis beyond heterosexual romance and marriage to encompass other social issues and institutions of equal importance to women.

Recent television and film versions of "Beauty and the Beast" provide a useful starting point for rethinking the space of postmodernist romance, in part because both so self-consciously identify their protagonists with particular "worlds" and then use these worlds to map out not only the terms of the romance itself but also the social consequences of romance as an institution. In both "B and B"/TV and *B and B*/Disney, romance is conceived in spatial terms as an alliance that mediates between particular worlds and their respective worldviews. As Rick Altman has shown, a bicameral format is conventional to the musical romance (a generic tradition to which *B and B*/Disney pays homage): two characters represent disparate, seemingly incompatible worlds; through romance (and music), their worlds are eventually merged and harmonized in the creation of the heterosexual couple.⁸ Rather than stressing the use of heterosexual romance as guarantee of a smooth merger of worlds, the feminist critic should arguably concentrate upon the tensions, losses, and repressions resultant from the overall process of bringing different worlds into alignment. Such an analysis stands to benefit not only from established feminist methods but also from methods more recently developed within gay/lesbian studies. Critics in both areas of gender studies share an interest in assessing the "public/private" sphere ideology characteristic of patriarchal culture, but gay/lesbian critics approach this problem through a specifically gay experience of

negotiating between worlds. Indeed, the image of the closet is precisely a spatial figure historically deployed as a means of representing this difficult process of negotiation. Although the closet plays only a small role in the analysis that follows, it furnishes a compact example of the extent to which gay/lesbian criticism jeopardizes the notion of romance as a fully “private affair,” insulated from more properly social pressures and concerns.

As will become apparent, the consolidation of feminist and gay/lesbian methods in the analysis that follows has also been motivated by questions of authorship: although “Beauty and the Beast” has historically been predominantly a women’s text, in the sense that it was originally written by and for women, in the twentieth century one of the most important adaptations of the story has been Jean Cocteau’s *La Belle et la Bête* (1946), a film that remodels the figure of the Beast and alters the narrative dynamics to promote homoerotic themes and tensions. Both the television and Disney versions of “Beauty and the Beast” are clearly indebted to the Cocteau version, but the former tends to mute the homoerotic dimensions of Cocteau’s work, while the latter activates and develops them to meet the terms of a post-AIDS context.

Beauty and the Beast: An Artistic Tradition. Beauty and the Beast is actually the name for a long textual tradition that spans literature, drama, and the visual arts. In her book on the Beauty and the Beast phenomenon, Betsy Hearne notes that historically this tradition has been dominated by women writers and readers.⁹ The first version of the tale was written by a French aristocrat, Madame Gabrielle de Villeneuve, in 1740. The more influential version was penned in 1756 by a French-born educator, Madame Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont, who was then living in England. Madame de Beaumont’s story of Belle, the young, newly disenfranchised woman who tries to save her father’s life by venturing into the castle of the monster who has threatened him, was designed as a moralizing tutor tale for young women, imbued with the fantasy of class rise that typifies the bourgeois fairy tale tradition.¹⁰ Although author Angela Carter was deeply influenced by Madame de Beaumont’s story, such that she drew liberally from it for some of the revisionist tales in *The Bloody Chamber*, her assessment of de Beaumont’s moral was laced with feminist sarcasm: “A man should be loved for his inner qualities alone, especially if he has an outwardly repulsive appearance, but pots of cash.”¹¹

In the twentieth century, one of the most influential adaptations of Madame de Beaumont’s story has been Jean Cocteau’s *La Belle et la Bête*, which significantly altered the original tale’s narrative structure and its dynamics of romance. Cocteau’s film reduces the importance of the original story’s focus on Belle’s perspective (but does not eradicate it) in order to promote the significance of male perspective and desire.¹² Cocteau invented the hunter Avenant as Belle’s human suitor, and he envisioned the Beast as a deeply romantic, introspective hero whose self-doubts and inner torment attain virtually Byronic proportions. In essence, Cocteau triangulated the romance and created a strong

doubling pattern between Avenant and the Beast, rendered explicit in the decision to have Jean Marais play both parts.

Cocteau also introduced a homoerotic dimension to the story, such that the title *La Belle et la Bête* now appeared to describe the relationship between the two male characters at least as much as the love story between Belle and the Beast. At the visual level, the business of displaying Marais or hiding him beneath the Beast's mask indicates that the issue of having beauty or not having it is largely a male concern of this film. The visual emphasis on the male body is particularly prominent in the film's climactic sequence involving the Beast's metamorphosis from bestial to human form. In the original story, it is the power of Belle's speech—her confession of desperate love—that transforms the Beast. But Cocteau's version effectively interrupts the words of Belle (Josette Day) with a visual crosscutting pattern that alternates between the Beast's dying soliloquy and Avenant's invasion of Diana's temple (which houses the Beast's magical powers). In addition to granting all narrative attention to Marais in his two roles, this visual technique guarantees that the real drama lies in the exchange of bestial masks between the two male principals: the Beast becomes the Prince, and Avenant becomes the Beast, just before plunging to his death.¹³

This description may suggest Cocteau's tendency to appropriate imagery from the original fairy tale and blend it with some of his own personal symbolism (e.g., Diana's arrow) as a means of organizing a symbolic exchange around the bodies of the two principal male characters. It is not coincidental that this exchange is precipitated by the goddess Diana, who famously abstained from heterosexual love. And yet ultimately the gay inflections in Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* feel fragmented and a little vague; indeed, most who admire this film probably recall it for the romantic exchanges between Belle and the Beast in the Beast's castle. For all the erotic symbolism at play, the relationship between hunter and Beast functions primarily as a male homosocial relationship of rivalry of the type charted by Eve Sedgwick in *Between Men*.¹⁴ Sedgwick concentrates her analysis on modern English texts that repeatedly feature a triangulated relationship between two male rivals forged upon the exchange of a woman. In the gothic tradition, a tradition to which Cocteau's film is indebted, the homosocial relationship of male rivalry often overtakes the heterosexual union in narrative significance, becoming heated, tensed by a virtually libidinous charge.¹⁵

One of the problems potential to Sedgwick's model is that, depending upon the text in question, it is often difficult to determine the precise relationship between a structure of male homosocial rivalry and more properly homosexual concerns. *La Belle et la Bête* actually seems to use a male homosocial configuration as discreet guise for expressing gay themes, and this may in turn account for some gay critics' expressions of ambivalence toward Cocteau's films. Richard Dyer comments: "That he [Cocteau] was gay was an open secret, but most of his work presents homosexuality in a symbolic form that it is easy enough to miss."¹⁶ Despite its problematic vagueness, however, *La Belle et la*

Bête set a precedent in using the animal body of the Beast to ground a mixing of gender attributes that results in a destabilization of the terms of traditional masculine heroism. Susan Hayward's analysis of the homoerotics of *La Belle et la Bête* suggests that the Beast is a character heavily marked by "gender trouble": characters use both masculine and feminine pronouns to refer to him (made possible by the feminine form of *la bête*); his costume is assembled from both masculine and feminine accessories (a man's doublet and boots, a woman's high, rigid lace collar, and so on).¹⁷ Stephen Harvey's camp description of Cocteau's Beast as "half King Kong, half Toto, and all man" succinctly captures the troubling of masculinity potential to this character.¹⁸

Cocteau's invention of the Avenant/Beast relationship also furnished a ground for envisioning this dyadic relation as a complex, double-edged bond, characterized at the visual level by an eroticized comparison of male bodies and at the narrative level by tensions and rivalry. In concert with the Beast figure's remodeling of masculinity, the hunter/Beast dynamic offers at least a partial thwarting of what otherwise appears to be a traditional heterosexual romance. Before examining how some of these revisionist features receive development in the Disney version of "Beauty and the Beast," I wish to consider briefly the television series version, which was reportedly inspired by the Cocteau film and which may have influenced Disney executives to choose "Beauty and the Beast" as the basis for an animated feature.

"Beauty and the Beast" on Television. "Beauty and the Beast"/TV premiered in the fall of 1987 with a two-hour pilot episode entitled "Once Upon a Time in the City of New York." The premise for the show was as follows:

A wealthy corporate attorney named Catherine Chandler (Linda Hamilton) is unhappy in both her professional life and in her romance. One night at a party, she quarrels with her fiancé and then dashes down to the street. She is almost immediately kidnapped by thugs in a van; they beat her, slash her face, and leave her unconscious body in Central Park. Vincent (Ron Perlman), a creature inexplicably born with both human and bestial features, finds Catherine and carries her down to the Tunnel World, a system of tunnels beneath the subways, where he lives with his adoptive father and the Tunnel World inhabitants, a sort of precapitalist community dressed in medieval garb. Vincent restores Catherine to health; eventually she learns to love him for his extraordinarily sensitive, generous behavior. Catherine returns to her world and quits her corporate job for a far less glamorous job as assistant to the deputy district attorney. For the next two seasons, the series charted the platonic, often troubled romance between Catherine and Vincent. This romance was interwoven with action-oriented plots that were sometimes organized around Catherine's legal career, other times around the Tunnel World inhabitants.¹⁹

As Henry Jenkins has shown, "B and B"/TV has resisted the ephemerality of the standard television series by enjoying an afterlife in the publications, clubs, and conventions that form the superstructure of fandom.²⁰ In a productive

example of fan ethnography, Jenkins demonstrates that during “B and B”/TV’s brief network life, female fans tried to protest network decisions to develop the show’s violent, action-oriented features by using fan publications and discussions to champion the importance of the “quieter” romantic moments between Vincent and Catherine. Although Jenkins goes far in demonstrating how this women’s gothic meets changing, often contradictory needs of contemporary working women who identify themselves as feminists, he tends to reduce the complexities of both the text and female responses to it by tracing viewer pleasure primarily to the supposedly “female” generic features of romance, particularly as these adhere to Janice Radway’s formulation of the “ideal romance.”²¹ My own understanding of the show’s pleasures overlaps with points made by Jenkins, but I wish to stress the importance of “B and B”/TV’s updating of the gothic form through extensive mechanisms of gender reversal, which are reinforced by the program’s distinctive mapping of the protagonists’ different “worlds.” For it seems that female fans’ fetishization of the “private” moments between Catherine and Vincent effectively forecloses discussion of the show’s use of romance to manage the representation of New York spaces.

In its deployment of a “high and low” movement between the skyscraping towers of Catherine’s New York world and the underground chambers of Vincent’s Tunnel World, “B and B”/TV mobilizes mechanisms of gender reversal that alter the terms of the “public/private” sphere ideology of traditional women’s romance. Catherine’s world encompasses the public spaces of New York. A mobile, active character who moves freely in the public sphere, Catherine is a workaholic attorney, whose world is shaped largely by her career, as well as by her platonic romance with Vincent. The show offers a model example of the “both/and” logic discussed by White: a typical episode might show Catherine returning home late at night, still sweaty from her evening workout. After showering and changing into an expensive silk negligee (a new one each week), she finds Vincent patiently awaiting her return on the balcony of her skyrise apartment. Although the show’s action plots are predicated on the notion that Catherine’s work exposes her to risk, there is little sense of textual retribution for her full commitment to her job. Indeed, in the show’s moral universe, Catherine’s fierce dedication to fighting injustice in New York is the “right thing.”

“B and B”/TV premiered one year after the publication of a notorious *Newsweek* cover story entitled “Too Late for Prince Charming.”²² This story used a statistical model to “prove” that women who postponed marriage for education and careers faced bleak odds against ever marrying, such that a woman’s chance for marriage would diminish with each passing year of her life. Although it would be facile to argue that “B and B”/TV was developed in direct response to this highly publicized article, it is noteworthy that both article and show used the form of the “fractured” fairy tale to articulate a familiar theme: by the late 1980s, the story of sex and the single girl had become a depressing one indeed. In its revision of the public/private dyad, “B and B”/TV seems designed to appeal to isolated and alienated, working and professional women, for whom the

promise of marriage is no longer a “sure thing.” The figure of Vincent is essential to this scheme: based on Cocteau’s introspective Beast, the blonde, leonine Vincent offers a departure from traditional “male hero” features, apparently accounting for the show’s continuing popularity with female (and some male) viewers. A list of Vincent’s “feminized” features would be long, but these are some of the more striking ones.

Vincent’s bestial shape necessarily constrains his movement: largely confined to the terrain of the Tunnel World, he can only venture into New York at night, and even then only at great personal risk. In contrast to the way Catherine’s life is shaped by a precarious balance of career and romance, Vincent’s identity is intensely, almost obsessively defined by his love for Catherine. The only rivals for his attention are the Tunnel World inhabitants, whom Vincent regards as his “family.” Vincent is an educator of children. He is often seen writing in his diary, a sign of the extent to which his speech and writing are given over to the emotive and confessional modes. And finally, it is fitting that in addition to his remarkable strength, the trait that marks Vincent as a kind of romantic “superhero” is his supernaturally powerful empathic bond to Catherine. Wherever she travels, Vincent can feel what she is feeling. When she is in danger, he senses her fear and rescues her.

Although Tania Modleski has argued that postmodernist cinema’s remodeling of masculinity is a postfeminist phenomenon that works to the exclusive benefit of men, “B and B”/TV’s use of the man/animal body to make over the traditional gothic male hero appears to have elicited intense, loyal response from female fans.²³ As I have tried to argue, however, feminist approaches to postmodernist romance should arguably extend discussion beyond straight women’s relationships to coupling and marriage to encompass “spaces beyond” these institutions. “B and B”/TV’s mapping of the space of the contemporary city is designed to manage more than just the femininity/masculinity dyad of sexual difference, and for this reason it seems important to consider the show’s articulations of space from a perspective that necessarily problematizes feminist efforts toward validation.

“B and B”/TV operates a three-tiered spatial scheme: the towers, where Catherine lives and works; the Tunnel World, where Vincent dwells; and the space of the street, which tends to be associated with risk and danger. This promotion of a verticalized mapping of romance is compatible with the show’s overall investment in visual spectacles of urban and fantasy spaces. Both of Catherine’s human lovers, Tom Gunther and Elliott Burch, are associated with New York’s tall buildings: the former is an urban developer; the latter, a Trump-like real estate magnate. In addition to the spatial spectacle of the balcony scenes (already discussed), the fantasy landscape of the Tunnel World provides yet more visual spectacle, such as that featured in the episode entitled “Winterfest,” in which the Tunnel World inhabitants gather for a feast in a great, decorated hall illuminated by candlelight.

In its verticalized rendering of New York spaces, “B and B”/TV actually

resembles *King Kong* (1933), a film that deploys spatial spectacle toward conservative ends. Lest the comparison seem arbitrary, “B and B”/TV contains a number of allusions to *Kong*, such as the balcony scenes that position the woman/beast pair near the liminal space of a window, and the premiere episode’s revelation of a tourist’s miniature of the Empire State Building among Vincent’s personal effects. In the context of the 1930s, *Kong*’s verticalized landscape furnished the setting for a fantasy of class rise that culminated in the destruction of the ape and left the white heterosexual couple locked in an embrace atop the Empire State Building. Many critics have argued that *Kong*’s destruction of New York gave expression to a national resentment against New York City, which in 1933 was still regarded as the scene of the Crash.²⁴

In a number of ways, the spatial scheme unfolded in “Beauty and the Beast” seems also to suggest the extent to which, by the late 1980s, New York was once again regarded as a national “panic center,” the scene of extreme race hatred, record-setting levels of homelessness, and AIDS phobia. Like *King Kong*, “B and B”/TV deploys its three-tiered spatial scheme for a streamlining effect that variously demonizes and/or excludes “dangerous” spaces, and these tend to gravitate toward the space of the “real,” the space of the street. The strategic use of space is evident in the premiere episode: while attending a lavish party in a room at the top of a tower, Catherine quarrels with her boyfriend; upon descending to the space of the street, she is promptly kidnapped and attacked. In another episode, Catherine and a handsome young Tunnel World resident named Michael are dining at a street-level restaurant that has glass windows. When Michael spots a homeless person sifting through garbage, he takes his own plate out to the man. The restaurant manager ejects Michael and Catherine, furiously exclaiming that since he strives to keep vagrants from bothering his customers, the last thing he needs is for a customer to feed a street person. Although “B and B”/TV distinguishes itself by featuring timely social issues such as the plight of the homeless, such references to the “real” tend to be fleeting: a later scene in this episode shows Catherine and Michael eating carryout Chinese food by candlelight in her apartment—a tower refuge that once again protects them (and us) from the sight of the street, with its spectacle of poverty.

“Beauty and the Beast” is thus characterized by an overall tendency to use the spaces of “high” and “low” as a means of covering over, and ultimately forgetting, the space of the street. The balcony scenes and the show’s overall emphasis on the towers of New York exhibit the spatial push upward into the “timeless” fantasy of white heterosexual romance. In a more novel twist, there is a simultaneous push downward into the Tunnel World, conceived as a peaceful refuge from the dangerous world above. The Tunnel World appears to offer a utopian vision, held in place by the bond between Vincent and Father: just as the empathic bond between Vincent and Catherine is intended to revise the concept of romance, so the adoptive bond between Vincent and Father effectively supplants the “blood ties” of the nuclear family with a utopian principle of

generating by adoption. This idea of organizing the “family” by means of a principle of inclusion means that the Tunnel World grows by taking in people unwanted or endangered in the world above. Yet for all its attempts to depict the Tunnel World as a sort of “rainbow coalition” that welcomes people of color, the aged, the poor, and others, the major repeating characters of the Tunnel World tend to maintain its visual profile as a white middle-class community in nontraditional garb.

Despite the importance of its revisionist aims, when created “B and B”/TV was in certain respects compatible with conservative agendas that prevailed in the late 1980s—something that may explain why the first channel to pick up the show for syndication was the Family Channel, a station owned by the Christian Broadcasting Network.²⁵ Seen in the context of the 1980s, the show’s use of the underground, a figure historically associated with collective resistance, to depict a white community “under siege,” falls perilously close to attempts by white conservative groups to depict themselves as a new “minority,” under siege by a host of multiculturalist “others.” Moreover, the show’s promotion of a chaste love story seems compatible with conservative discourses of safe sex (abstinence and marriage). Indeed, the choice of contemporary New York as a dangerous landscape against which to formulate a fantasy romance essentially places “B and B”/TV among the many conservative AIDS allegories produced in recent years. Although it is not clear whether Disney executives were thinking of “B and B”/TV when they selected “Beauty and the Beast” for production, the television show’s combination of action and “adult romance” may have seemed amenable to Disney’s renewed efforts to reach both child and adult audiences with its animated features. The Disney version of “Beauty and the Beast” shares “B and B”/TV’s tendency to map out fantasy worlds in a utopian scheme, but the film differs considerably in incorporating the perspective of the person with AIDS.

“Beauty and the Beast” According to Disney. My analysis of the Disney version of “Beauty and the Beast” is predicated upon the assumption of at least partial gay authorship, apparently traceable to creative input from producer/lyricist Howard Ashman, who died of AIDS during production, most of his work already completed. Although there is some risk in attempting to specify the nature of creative agency in a Disney production, Disney films seeming perhaps even more “corporate” in style and tone than other Hollywood features, *B and B*/Disney stands as a musical romance that features “countercurrents” that freely access gay artistic and reception histories of musicals. Since Ashman was in charge of the film’s musical design, it seems reasonable to designate him the *auteur* of this portion of the film. Certain aspects of the film’s gay subtext may not have originated with Ashman, but in keeping with conventions favored in director studies, I am using his name to designate the gay strands of the film for which he and other collaborators were responsible. Since I was unable to locate interviews with Ashman either in mainstream or gay publications, production

information that follows is admittedly sketchy, inferentially constructed from promotional and press materials, placed in concert with the film itself.

The script for *Beauty and the Beast* was written by Linda Woolverton, who claims to have studied the literary tradition behind the tale. Richard Purdum, an American-born animator living in England, was hired to direct.²⁶ Purdum appears to have valued the tale's potential for atmospheric expressionism, particularly in the creation of the Beast's castle world. But ten weeks into production, Jeffrey Katzenberg, Disney's chief of production, declared Purdum's work too dark and dramatic.²⁷ It was felt that the second half, set in the Beast's castle, dragged and lacked action. At this point, Katzenberg brought in the musical team of Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, who had worked on *The Little Mermaid* (1989), which was then nearing release. Apparently pleased with Ashman's contributions to *Mermaid*, Katzenberg seems to have granted him considerable latitude during the process of overhauling the script for *B and B*. Indeed, available promotional and press accounts feature a kind of motif, in which Woolverton and others repeatedly credit Ashman with major script decisions.

Once hired, Ashman, Woolverton, and other key production personnel gathered in a hotel located near Ashman's home in New York state, where they spent several weeks overhauling the script. Some of the changes made restored devices from the Cocteau film; others helped to convert the film into a musical comedy. Ashman suggested that this should be the Beast's story, and that dramatic emphasis should fall upon this character.²⁸ The hunter Gaston was invented to be Belle's suitor and the Beast's rival. The rose, a traditional element from the original fairy tale, was converted into an hourglass figure, marking the Beast as a character whose time is running out.²⁹ Finally, Ashman solved the story problem of the "dragging" second half with the suggestion that various household objects be featured as enchanted servants of the Prince. This would enable musical numbers and bits of comic business. Perhaps in response to Ashman's conversion of the film into a musical comedy, Purdum resigned in December 1989, saying, "This is not the film I want to make."³⁰ Ashman died in March 1991, and the film was released toward the end of that year.

Despite efforts from Woolverton and other *B and B* personnel to insist upon the absolute originality of their film, the Disney version is a pastiche of effects from previous incarnations. Indeed, the film's strengths reside in its summary and preservation of the story's female and gay authorial traditions. The film's extreme status as pastiche-work admittedly means that its loose, fragmentary form potentially enables any number of readings, while simultaneously threatening to disable the coherence of any one reading. Feminist reviews tend to confirm this sense of the film's "unmanageable" qualities: some highlight features deemed conservative, such as the film's depiction of the Beast as a brutal, violent hero (a reading I find unsupported by textual evidence), while others discover feminist potential in Belle's curiosity and independence.³¹ Although the film's feminist discourses are important to its updating of the "Beauty and the Beast" story, these discourses ultimately exist in a rather weak, fragmented

state; by contrast, the film's gay currents, making a rather surprising appearance in a Disney "family picture," are both strong and consistent—perhaps because Ashman's songs are so essential to the film's tonal fabric.

The gay currents in *B and B/Disney* materialize in a combination of three major textual features: (1) the bicameral scheme, which divides the space of the film into the world of Belle (and Gaston), and the world of the Beast; (2) the doubling of Gaston and Beast; (3) the music, where the gay subtext is most insistent. Indeed, the film's gay meanings become more pronounced when one listens to the musical soundtrack, divorced from the animated images. In contrast to his work for *The Little Shop of Horrors*, which has a "pop/rock" quality about it, Ashman's songs for both *The Little Mermaid* and *B and B/Disney* have a nostalgic quality, paying homage to classic musicals from the Broadway and Hollywood traditions, as well as acknowledging a tradition of gay reception of musicals that has recently begun to receive attention from scholars interested in audience-oriented analysis.³² As a "multimedia" form that achieves expression through levels of dance, music, narrative, and performance, the musical potentially fosters dynamics of spectatorship that are unusually complex, fractured, and mobile. Although space does not permit a detailed discussion of this, it seems that both textual conventions of the musical form and extratextual traditions, such as cults that have grown up around both male and female stars, have given rise to creative/reception traditions in which gay subtextual meanings become channeled through both male and female characters. This is the case with both *Mermaid* and *B and B*, although gay meanings in the latter film tend to take shape primarily around the figures of Gaston and the Beast.

The bicameral format featured in both *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast* issues from the fairy tale tradition but is also a convention of what Altman calls the fairy tale musical.³³ Although Altman regards this spatial scheme as a basis upon which to achieve resolution in straight romance, the separation of mundane from fantasy worlds in *Mermaid* and *B and B/Disney* is also partially or wholly amenable to alternative readings that emphasize escape from traditional gender roles and from straight romance itself. A fairy tale musical often deemed amenable to gay revisionist reading is *The Pirate* (1947), a film that extensively thematizes gender as masquerade and inserts a romping clown performance in place of the usual wedding finish. Jane Feuer comments that *The Pirate's* utopian fantasy offers "a perfect world of freedom from the constraints of gender."³⁴ Both *Mermaid* and *B and B/Disney* deploy the fairy tale musical's bicameral spatial scheme to map a gay dilemma of trying to choose between different worlds—one explicitly associated with family and marriage, the other configured along the lines of fantasy, escape, and forbidden romance.

In *The Little Mermaid*, for example, the mermaid Ariel is a restless and inquisitive figure who struggles to escape the undersea world, where she lives with her father and sisters, in order to venture into a forbidden romance with the human prince on land. The price of entrance into that world is an irreversible change to the body, which in turn means assuming a new identity that

provokes passionate outrage from Ariel's father, Triton. The gay inflections potential to this scheme are most prominent in the production number "Poor Unfortunate Souls," sung by the sea witch Ursula, a character clearly modeled on the transvestite star Divine. In its use of vocalist Pat Carroll's ability to slide up and down the musical register, from shrieks to baritones, "Poor Unfortunate Souls" is an unmistakable sendup of the campy female impersonation number. Ursula becomes for Ariel a sort of sexual gatekeeper who has the magical power to make the mermaid over for romance in another world. The song is laced with gay double entendres such as this: worrying about the irreversible implications of her decision, Ariel says, "If I become human, I'll never be with my father or sisters anymore." Ursula musters the cutting sarcasm of camp to retort, "But you'll have your *man*. Life's full of *tough* choices, isn't it?" (emphasis in the original).³⁵

Ultimately, the gay subtext of *The Little Mermaid* feels fragmentary and inconsistent, so that it does not necessarily promote progressive meanings. The problem with *Mermaid's* bicameral scheme is that the world to which Ariel longs to escape ultimately turns out to be so dull. Although "Poor Unfortunate Souls" activates the gay potential intrinsic to the trope of metamorphosis, this potential cannot be sustained once Ariel's transformation is complete and she enters into a world shaped by the most standard human (read: heterosexual) courtship rituals and eventual marriage.³⁶

By contrast, the bicameral scheme of *Beauty and the Beast* works better, because the world Belle longs to escape is quite literally the provinces, and this space is explicitly marked out as one that offers no future beyond marriage and children. The world of the Beast is an enchanted one, offering a fantasy of flight into romance that, if not explicitly named as gay, is certainly envisioned as an alternative to the predictable destiny of heterosexual romance. As was the case with the character Ariel, Belle's singing voice is momentarily deployed to express both straight feminine and gay desires of shrugging off social expectations of conventional marriage. The opening production number "Belle" is typical of Ashman's "queer" appropriation of standard songs from the musical tradition.³⁷ "Belle," a clear homage to "Maria" from *The Sound of Music* (1965), takes the famous line "How do you solve a problem like Maria?" and gives it a queer twist: as Belle sings of her desire to escape provincial life and enter into a world of exciting romance, the villagers comically puzzle over her "odd" desires:

Villagers: Look, there she goes, the girl is strange but special,
A most peculiar mademoiselle!
It's a pity and a sin. She doesn't quite fit in.
For she really is a funny girl, a beauty but a funny girl,
She really is a funny girl, that Belle!

This brief passage is typical of the queer effect of Ashman's lyrics, in that he would often take a musical standard such as "Maria," extrapolate from it the basic concept that had made it amenable to queer reading (i.e., Maria as "diffi-

cult," a puzzle to the nuns in her convent), and then repeat and extend this concept. The end result is that the so-called gay subtext actually seems to lie very near the text's surface, so that it is virtually competitive with the meanings that might be construed as "dominant." In "Belle," the villagers' lyrics repeat such words as "strange," "distracted," "peculiar," "a puzzle," "different," and "funny," so that eventually this descriptive battery becomes connotative of the way straight people myopically puzzle over the enigmas posed by gay desire.

"Belle" represents one of the moments in the film when feminist and gay discourses overlap and converge. As we shall see, a similar discursive convergence occurs in the scene in which Belle and Beast first confront one another in the West Wing. Through much of the film, however, the more prominent representatives of the two worlds are Gaston and the Beast, and it is their spectacular clash that forms the film's climax. Perhaps even more than was the case with the Cocteau version, the title of the Disney feature seems to refer to the relationship between Gaston and the Beast, for they are the characters obsessed with the business of having beauty or not having it. Both are drawn in ways that exaggerate the proportions of the male body: the animators create a visual parallel between these male characters, each drawn as a comically "phallic," top-heavy figure who rises and swells when he is angered.³⁸ The film also connects both characters with the figure of the mirror to suggest their obsessiveness about form and appearances: Gaston habitually checks his appearance whenever a mirror or some other reflective surface is at hand. After a "makeover" that precedes a date with Belle, the Beast studies his appearance in the mirror, only to discover his new resemblance to the Cowardly Lion from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).

The Cocteau version set a precedent in configuring hunter and Beast as two gay types (or stereotypes): the one, a well-built proletarian male admired for his power and beauty; the other, a reclusive aristocrat, whose decadent, fin de siècle world connotatively suggests a waning condition.³⁹ In a "democratizing" effect typical of Disney adaptations of fairy tales, *B and B*/Disney strips away any semes of class difference that may still adhere to these two characters, with the resultant effect of further exaggerating their status as gay (stereo)types. As Alexander Doty has suggested in his analysis of Paul Reubens's work as Pee-Wee Herman, efforts made by gay artists to appropriate gay stereotypes toward positive ends can produce contradictory results. Doty argues that Reubens's use of gay stereotypes from the 1950s, a moment when he was a boy like Pee-wee, becomes filtered through the critical perspective he holds as an adult gay man in the 1980s. And yet the temporal vagueness of the Playhouse context into which these stereotypes are inserted seems to foster contradictory political effects, as traditional, pre-Stonewall figurations of gayness (e.g., "queerness as heterosexualized cross-gender identification") become intermingled with more progressive meanings suited to a post-Stonewall perspective.⁴⁰ Ashman's reliance on gay stereotypes and the connotative potential of song lyrics could be seen as equally problematic. Indeed, Ashman's work resembles Reubens's in its

tendency to mix “retro,” nostalgic aspects of gay culture with more contemporary critical meanings suited to a post-AIDS context. Despite these problems, I would argue that Ashman’s ability to make the fullest use of music’s potential for abstraction and rapid shifts in tonality meant that he was able to deploy music to force complex, multilayered gay “reads” from these otherwise flat stereotypical figures. This process is most apparent in the use of the character Gaston.

In a fashion similar to the Cocteau version, *B and B*/Disney forges a male homosocial relationship of rivalry between Gaston and Beast, then charges this with gay currents. Once more, this homosocial dynamic has a double edge to it: at times, the two characters are locked into a series of visual parallels that enhance their status as gay types; at others, they become differentiated and even diametrically opposed to suggest differences between gay male and straight male perspectives. Gaston is the pivot to this dynamic: early in the film his beauty is accentuated in a parody of the voyeuristic look at the male body important to the gay reception of musicals; yet as the film unfolds, Gaston is increasingly used to suggest the violence and animosity directed by straight men against gay men.

Gaston is no simple villain. Early scenes emphasize his status as a narcissistic fool, and his comic absorption in his own body and the phallic weapons he uses to adorn it is treated with affectionate irony. Gaston’s narcissism and his propensity to collect phallic decorative objects are conveyed in the visual design of his lodge: a massive self-portrait hangs over the mantel, and as Gaston himself tells us, he uses antlers in all of his decorating (a possible allusion to the decor of Robert Mitchum’s den in *Home from the Hill* [1960]). Gaston’s great love of all things masculine forms the content of the production number “Gaston,” in which Gaston and his friends joyously celebrate his power and male beauty. “Gaston” is yet another queer homage, this time to the male chorus number from the musical tradition (e.g., “There Ain’t Nothin’ Like a Dame,” from *South Pacific*). Ashman’s lyrics are amusing in that they exist as little more than an elaborate fetishization of the powerful male body, carried out in the most hyperbolic terms:

Women: For there’s no one as burly and brawny!

Gaston: As you see, I’ve got biceps to spare!

Lefou: Not a bit of him scraggly or scrawny.

Gaston: That’s right! And every last inch of me’s covered with hair!

Because this is only a cartoon and no “real” body is present, the number “Gaston” has a parodic quality to it, suggesting that gay reception of male chorus numbers has involved voyeuristic looks at performers’ bodies. And yet the song’s tone is double-edged, as it also suggests a certain camp perspective that regards characters like Gaston as a bit foolish, taking too much delight in the most excessive displays of traditional masculine behavior—punching, spitting, stomping around in big boots, eating enough eggs for that “bargelike” appearance. In the context of the film, Gaston’s efforts to prove the “truth” of his man-

hood through traditional, indeed stereotypical displays of masculine behavior place him more to the heterosexual side of the Gaston/Beast relation, even as he becomes the vehicle for parodic references to the mechanics of gay male visual pleasure. Indeed, Gaston's excessive male posturing seems to be part of an overall pattern of critique of straight male behavior that was praised by some feminist critics; another example of this appears early in the film, when it seems that Gaston's desire to marry Belle has less to do with any particular affection for her than it does with a desire to beget as many male children as possible straight away.

Although the song "Gaston" deploys the light tones of affectionate parody, Gaston's early displays of narcissism are not innocent, since they become connected with his later propensity toward violent projective behavior. Key to this process is the figure of the mirror. In feminist film theory, the male gaze used to be depicted mostly as a unidirectional phenomenon, expressive of a form of power and aggressiveness intrinsic to the process of objectifying the recipient of the gaze. In *B and B/Disney* the figure of the mirror becomes crucial to the process of dramatizing mechanics of vision, with their attendant effects of *perspective* (identity, desire, etc.). The Beast's mirror is a magic one that links the two worlds and thus draws together their respective "world-views" for comparison and contrast. The mirror permits the looker to stand in one world and see what is taking place at that moment in the other world. A magic mirror can make it possible to suggest that the business of seeing an/other is inextricably bound up with the business of how one sees oneself. It can also suggest that the drives toward loving images and hating them run very close indeed.

Mirrors serve multiple functions in the films of Cocteau: *Le Sang d'un poète* (1930), for example, also positions the mirror as gateway between real and fantasy worlds. In Cocteau's work, the mirror can also function as a romantic figure signaling introspection. Characters in *La Belle et la Bête* gaze into the mirror to see the truth about their inner selves, as when one of Belle's sisters gazes into the mirror to discover herself in the figure of a monkey. The Disney version tends to sustain this latter set of meanings for the Beast, who displays an introspective tendency to study his image in an effort to please another.

Gaston's habit of checking himself in the mirror has already been shown to be a feature of his narcissism. Yet another gay joke stems from this, in that the character more strongly associated with heterosexual male behavior is attributed with the feature stereotypically assumed to be "essential" to gay male identity and behavior. As the film unfolds, Gaston's relationship to the mirror is transformed into the mechanics of violent projection, a process dramatized in the production number "The Mob Song," a lynch mob-type number that functions as the film's most explicit reference to AIDS panic. In this scene, Belle's father, Maurice, who has tried unsuccessfully to warn the villagers about the Beast's existence, is about to be carted off to an insane asylum. Belle, who has just returned home from the Beast's castle, holds up the Beast's mirror for the villagers, with the intention of displaying the Beast's countenance as proof that

he exists. (At this moment, the Beast is in his castle.) But Gaston seizes the mirror from Belle and holds it up. Although the face of the Beast is quiet and mournful, Gaston interprets this image as the face of a dangerous monster of voracious appetite. He further imagines the Beast as a character capable of the most violent and excessive behavior: "The Beast will make off with your children! He'll come after them in the night. We're not safe until his head is mounted on my wall! I say we kill the Beast!"

In contrast to most versions of "Beauty and the Beast," which envision the Beast as a threat to Belle alone, the Disney version uses the lyrics of "The Mob Song" to suggest that the villagers (who join in the song) envision the Beast primarily as a threat to their wives and children. In this respect, "The Mob Song" is central to the film's progressive AIDS allegory, the song's lyrics functioning as an evocation of the way conservatives have used the idea of "plague" to demonize people with AIDS. The song's lyrics unfold to construct the Beast as an excessive figure whose body is a collage of cutting and tearing parts (razor-sharp fangs, massive paws, killer claws). This musical device thus draws the song in parallel with the hyperbolic lyrics of "Gaston" in that both songs use layered images of phallic excess to delineate the form of the large, powerful male figure. This technique underscores the idea that Gaston's ravings about the Beast actually form an instance of the purest projection: the ultimate irony is that this huge man whose body operates as a collage of cutting, penetrating weapons is now projecting a warped version of his own image onto the body of the character he hates and fears.

Not coincidentally, one of Gaston's first acts in the film involves projection: during the opening production number "Belle," Gaston sees Belle, proclaims that she is the most beautiful girl in town, then tells his friend Lefou, "That makes her the best." This is standard heterosexual male projection, for Gaston imagines that Belle's beauty makes her a valuable object, not recognizing that the source of his pleasure resides not in her body but in the culturally inscribed mechanics of his own vision. It makes sense, then, that when Gaston's gaze drifts from Belle toward the figure of the Beast, it remains projective yet assumes a violent form which, in its attribution of excess to the body of the Beast, connotes the mechanisms of male homophobic response.

Even as Gaston tries to incite the villagers to hunt down and kill the Beast, the Beast himself is alone and languishing in the West Wing of his castle, the dropping petals of his magic rose marking the ebbing of his strength. My analysis of this film perhaps grants too little attention to the Beast—something that reflects in part my irritation with the animators' success at rendering him one of the "cute" figures in the Disney tradition. Still, the Beast's association with the forbidden space of the West Wing is crucial to the film's subtext. One of the moments when the film's feminist and gay discourses overlap occurs when Belle and Beast first confront one another in the West Wing, a space beautifully rendered as a dark and mysterious chamber, illuminated only by the rose that shimmers under its glass. Belle's investigation of this room is reminiscent of Angela

Carter's tale "The Bloody Chamber," in which the female protagonist enters her wedding chamber to discover that her sinister groom has decorated the room with strange, vaguely repulsive white lilies.⁴¹

As a mysterious private chamber intended to signal the "true" identity of the Beast, the West Wing also carries strong connotations of the closet. In the Cocteau version, it was Belle's bedchamber that was a key setting, but here the Beast's chamber assumes major narrative importance, not only as a mechanism of suspense, but also as a space from which the Beast emerges to battle it out with Gaston atop a castle tower. The visual contrast made between the deteriorated form of the Beast and the painting of him as a beautiful young man possibly sets up a stereotypical opposition between ugliness and beauty reminiscent of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but in this context the ugliness/beauty dyad also supports a tension, crucial to the film's AIDS allegory, between the issue of having health or not having it.⁴² When I first saw the film, the wishful ending in which the languishing Beast becomes reinvigorated by love and emerges from his chamber to confront Gaston struck me as a sort of *King Kong*-type finish in which hunter and Beast at last get a chance to do battle atop a tower. Although this scene may not have been intended as a direct reference to *Kong*, it does seem appropriate that in this film, for once, the hunter who caused everything but who could never see his own implication in the violence is permitted to just drop from the tower, while the Beast looks on.

Conclusion. There may be objections to this reading of *B and B/Disney*, particularly in light of a long critical tradition of denouncing all Disney films as "obviously" conservative, linked to an entertainment empire that has come to signify the outer limits of commercial excess.⁴³ At the outset of this piece, I cited the problem of the Ashman/Menken song "Be Our Guest": in the context of the film, this song accompanies a visual extravaganza intended to welcome Belle into the Beast's enchanted world, the animated images offering a pastiche of visual quotations from Hollywood musicals revered in the camp canon. The subtextual meanings potential to this song vanish once it is torn from the film for use in an advertising campaign for the Disney theme parks.

Rather than closing with this illustration of the apparent fragility of gay subtextual meanings, dependent as they are upon particular contextual conditions and spectators able to pick up on them, I wish to turn instead to a rather different use of Ashman's work. Ashman's lyrics for *The Little Mermaid*, the last film completed at his death, also appear on panels of the AIDS quilt. Although the quilt is a controversial memorial, deemed by some to be excessively mournful and a poor substitute for action, it nevertheless stands as a spatial spectacle that insistently concretizes the gaining dimensions of the epidemic by consuming more and more space. In the portion of the quilt I was able to see in Detroit in 1993, two panels were devoted to Ashman. One is a fairly straightforward tribute, featuring stenciled images of Ariel and her father, Triton, with the caption, "Oh that he had one more song to sing, one more song." The other, one of

the more visually striking panels in the quilt, deploys intricate handwork and rich fabrics of saturated hues to offer an underwater scene populated by an assortment of exotic fish. In the fashion of a collage piece, the artist has cut up Ashman's lyrics and dispersed them amongst the fish: "The men up there don't like a lot of blather," and "Don't forget the importance of body language" (from "Poor Unfortunate Souls"); "Look at this stuff, isn't it neat?" (from "Part of Your World"); and so on. Many of the lines chosen have a camp feel, the panel as a whole capturing the witty turns characteristic of Ashman's song style.

Since creators of the quilt remain anonymous, there is no way of determining the nature of the artists' relationships to Ashman. And yet the latter panel seems marked by a gay visual aesthetic compatible with subtextual meanings in *The Little Mermaid*: eliminating the Disney characters altogether, the artist promotes Ashman's lyrics to a place of central importance. Favoring the fantasy potential of the undersea world, the artist also prefers to associate Ashman's work with a collection of vibrant fish rather than an individual or couple. Mimi White suggests that the postmodernist romance poses a particular challenge to the feminist critic, for this genre, so all-encompassing in its effects, seems capable of satisfying the terms of diametrically opposed political readings. Still, the citation of Ashman's lyrics on the quilt suggests that perhaps the "patched-together" quality of pastiche texts actually renders them that much more amenable to being pulled into new spaces for uses not fully anticipated during production. In addition, if commercial film culture is a complex field of contexts within which various forms of intervention can and must be carried out, Ashman's intervention at Disney stands as a corrective to the type of conservative AIDS allegory enacted in "B and B"/TV. For the latter drew its contours from the shape of AIDS panic yet could never speak this act of repression.

Notes

I wish to thank Corey Creekmur, Kathleen McHugh, and the anonymous referees of *Cinema Journal* for their comments on an early version of this essay.

1. Quoted in Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 136.
2. Although canceled in 1990, "B and B"/TV continues to air in syndication—hence the use of present tense.
3. Barbara Klinger, "Much Ado about Excess: Genre, Mise-en-scène, and the Woman in *Written on the Wind*," *Wide Angle* 11, no. 4 (October 1989): 4–22.
4. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 154.
5. *Ibid.*, 6.
6. Mimi White, "Representing Romance: Reading/Writing/Fantasy and the 'Liberated' Heroine of Recent Hollywood Films," *Cinema Journal* 28, no. 3 (spring 1989): 41.
7. Sharon Willis, "Disputed Territories: Masculinity and Social Space," in *Male Trouble*, ed. Constance Penley and Sharon Willis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 263–81.
8. Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 16–58.

9. Betsy Hearne, *Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
10. Madame Leprince de Beaumont, "Beauty and the Beast," in *Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales*, trans. Angela Carter (Boston: Otter, 1991), 45–62.
11. Angela Carter, "Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale by Betsy Hearne," *Folklore* 102, no. 1 (1991): 124 [book review].
12. For a feminist critique of Cocteau's revisions of the tale, see Sylvia Bryant, "Re-Constructing Oedipus through 'Beauty and the Beast,'" *Criticism* 31, no. 4 (fall 1989): 439–53.
13. My analysis of the ending overlaps with points made by Susan Hayward in a lucid discussion of *La Belle et la Bête*'s homoerotic dimensions; see "Gender Politics—Cocteau's Belle Is Not That Bête: Jean Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête* (1946)," in *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (London: Routledge, 1990), 133.
14. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 21–27.
15. *Ibid.*, 97–117, 161–200.
16. Richard Dyer, *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film* (London: Routledge, 1990), 64.
17. Hayward, "Gender Politics," 128–30.
18. Stephen Harvey, "The Movies of Jean Cocteau," in *Jean Cocteau and the French Scene*, ed. Alexandra Anderson and Carol Saltus (New York: Abbeville, 1984), 207. Hayward cites homophobic interpretations of the Beast found in French reviews written for the film's first run. One reviewer described the Beast's movements as "mincing of an old queen" and compared them to Cocteau's own gestures during public poetry readings (quoted in Hayward, "Gender Politics," 135).
19. Prompted by Linda Hamilton's desire to quit the series, producers created a third-season premiere episode that culminates in Catherine's death, just moments after she has borne Vincent a son. With the departure of Hamilton, the show's quality deteriorated considerably, resulting in its cancellation in January 1990. My interpretation concentrates on episodes from the first two seasons. For a condensed history of the show's network life, see Paula Vitaris and Peter Formaini, "Promises of Yesterday: A Short History of *Beauty and the Beast*," *Beauty and the Beast* 1, no. 1 (May 1993): n.p. [an Innovation comic book].
20. Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 120–51.
21. Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 119–56.
22. "Too Late for Prince Charming," *Newsweek*, 2 June 1986, 54+.
23. Tania Modleski, *Feminism without Women: Culture and Criticism in a Postfeminist Age* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 3–22, 76–111.
24. See, for example, Judith Mayne, "King Kong and the Ideology of Spectacle," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 1, no. 4 (1976): 384.
25. Vitaris and Formaini, "Promises of Yesterday," n.p. The Family Channel re-edited some episodes, eliminating content deemed "objectionable," and it skipped some episodes altogether.
26. Bob Thomas, *Disney's Art of Animation: From Mickey Mouse to Beauty and the Beast* (New York: Hyperion, 1991), 142–44.
27. *Ibid.*, 144.
28. David Ansen, "Just the Way Walt Made 'Em," *Newsweek*, 18 November 1991, 80.
29. Thomas, *Disney's Art*, 146–47.
30. *Ibid.*, 144.

31. Negative feminist responses to *B and B/Disney* include Kathi Maio, "Mr. Right Is a Beast: Disney's Dangerous Fantasy," *Visions Magazine* 7 (summer 1992): 44–45, and Elizabeth Dodson Gray, "Beauty and the Beast: A Parable for Our Time," in *Women Respond to the Men's Movement: A Feminist Collection*, ed. Kay Leigh Hagan (San Francisco: Pandora, 1992), 159–68. Positive reviews include Marina Warner, "Beauty and the Beasts," *Sight and Sound* 2, no. 6 (October 1992): 6–11, and Harriett Hawkins, "Maidens and Monsters in Modern Popular Culture: *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Beauty and the Beast*," *Textual Practice* 7, no. 2 (summer 1993): 258–66.
32. See, for example, Richard Dyer, "Judy Garland and Gay Men," in *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), 141–94, and Jane Feuer, "A Postscript for the Nineties," in *The Hollywood Musical*, rev. ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 123–45.
33. Altman, *The American Film Musical*, 129–99.
34. Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical*, 142.
35. In "The Fisherman and His Soul," Oscar Wilde's revision of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid," a mortal man falls in love with a mermaid and then struggles to choose between real and romantic worlds, ultimately paying a high price for loving an undersea creature. In addition to offering a gay revision of the original fairy tale, Wilde's story features a critique of Catholicism's constraints on expressions of love. See "The Fisherman and His Soul," in *Complete Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 129–79.
36. For a sensitive feminist critique of *The Little Mermaid*, see Susan White, "Split Skins: Female Agency and Bodily Mutilation in *The Little Mermaid*," in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, ed. Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins (New York: Routledge, 1993), 182–95. Since White does not consider the film's gay discourses, our readings differ considerably, but our pessimistic conclusions about the role of closure in the film are compatible.
37. The word "queer" is being invoked here to describe those moments when gay artists and readers strategically appropriate texts in ways that bend and subvert dominant meanings, in a fashion rather analogous to the feminist concept of "reading against the grain." Alexander Doty analyzes queer reception practices in *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
38. Warner makes this point about the Beast ("Beauty and the Beasts," 10).
39. The latter type is discussed as a conventional feature of the gothic novel in Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 92–94.
40. Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer*, 83.
41. Angela Carter, "The Bloody Chamber," in *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1981), 7–41. For a study of the significance of flowers in gay culture, see Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1988), 39–59.
42. It is well known that Cocteau battled health problems throughout production of *La Belle et la Bête*, and this was the basis upon which he compared himself to the Beast in his diary. See Jean Cocteau, *Beauty and the Beast: Diary of a Film*, trans. Ronald Duncan (New York: Dover, 1972), 67.
43. Although a recent issue of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* 92, no. 1 (winter 1993) tends to maintain this critical approach to Disney culture, other recent work emphasizes the ideological complexities of Disney films and theme parks: see, for example, Eric Smoodin, ed., *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* (New York: Routledge, 1994).